



8 News
*College president contemplating
smoking ban across campus*



11 Valentines
*Valentine's Day: Love or Hate
one-time special section*

NECC Northern Essex Community College Observer

The Student Newspaper of Northern Essex Community College, Haverhill, Lawrence & North Andover, Mass.



Robin Czifrik photo

People stop to view the virtual sea of destruction in downtown Lawrence.

Community unites to help fire victims

*Lawrence and the
surrounding cities try
to pick up the pieces*

BY ROBIN CZIFRIK
Contributing Reporter

Two weeks after the devastating Lawrence fire that tore through a South Lawrence neighborhood, damaging or destroying everything in its path and leaving nearly 200 homeless, Lawrence Mayor Michael Sullivan is grateful to be part of a community that unites in times of disaster.

At a Jan. 31 press conference, the mayor praised thousands of people who have made all the difference in the lives of those affected by the massive Jan. 21 inferno.

Sullivan first thanked and praised those who responded to the scene for a spectacular job. "Without you there would have been a loss of life and people really, really hurt," said the mayor. "Because of the fire department, EMTs, and police, the city came out of this with no one perishing and no one hurt, which I think is incredible," he said.

Lawrence Fire Chief Peter Takvorian also expressed his gratitude to the Lawrence fire crews as well as those from surrounding communities and said, "if not for mutual aid I think we would have suffered a loss of life and many other injuries. The city of Lawrence is grateful to you."

At the time of the blaze, the Lawrence Fire Department was facing 20 potential layoffs and the closing of two firehouses. Their jobs will remain intact.

According to witnesses, residents awoke about 2:30 a.m. that morning to the sounds of police, firefighters and others yelling and screaming as they pounded on doors or broke them down in frantic effort to evacuate quickly and save lives. They left with the clothes on their backs.

Fire officials quickly realized the fire was too massive to fight on their own and immediately reached out to 13 surrounding communities - Andover, Methuen, Haverhill, North Andover, Reading, Georgetown, Tewksbury, Dracut, Groveland, Lowell, Chelmsford, Middleton, and Salem, NH all responded to the call.

See Lawrence page 7

NECC student wins major award

*Zuccolla to make his
way to national
theater finals*

BY DANIEL A. POTOCKI
Editor in Chief

Former NECC student Mike Zuccolla has won the prestigious right to be one of two finalists in the Irene Ryan Acting Scholarship Auditions. That means he will represent NECC and Region one at the Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival (KCACTF) National Festival in Washington and perform at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.

"The auditions and the process to get to them are very rigorous," said Jim Murphy, his coach and director.

Zuccolla and his partner Emily Murphy performed a scene from Lanford Wilson's "Burn" in round one of the competitions.

There were 215 students and their partners competing in round one from 55 colleges and universities

around New England.

Zuccolla and his partner advanced to the semi-finals where they performed the same scene and a scene from George Bernard Shaw's "Arms and the Man" in competition with 35 others selected from round one.

In the finals the field was narrowed to 16. Zuccolla and his partner Emily did the same two scenes and Zuccolla finished with a monologue from Othello.

"With when it was all said and done we were floating on air," said Jim Murphy.

Fellow actor Babak Alian knew the gravity of the situation.

"Mike was absolutely phenomenon. He got better with each performance. He received a standing ovation from his peers in a room full of talented actors. That is truly a sign to his innate ability," said Alian.

Zuccolla summed it up best himself say, "It is almost surreal, I have the paper but I still don't believe it. It just makes me feel so proud, knowing that Jim, Emily, Susan Sanders, and I worked so hard on this. Without them I wouldn't be here today."



Courtesy photo

Mike Zuccolla performing on stage for fans and actors alike to win awards.

Opinion

Proposed smoking ban wouldn't work

EDITORIAL

The proposed campus wide ban is a wonderful idea. Improved health and less second hand smoke in the air are nothing to sneeze....or in this case cough at, but as nice as it would be to see smoking eliminated on campus, it is simply an unrealistic goal.

Before you smokers start your inevitable complaining, perhaps you should try taking a bit of responsibility for yourselves. The rule that you must smoke at least 25 feet from a building entrance is almost constantly ignored; even more so in the cold winter months. Security guards must often shoo these offenders away. Now once and a while people will honestly forget, but there are times when people walk outside and smoke after taking a quick look around to make sure no one is watching. These are the ones who should be able to

find culpability for their own actions if indeed a smoking ban does come to pass.

Were it to pass however, the ban would be almost impossible to enforce. Security guards should not have to walk around playing the role of a private investigator, sneaking into bathrooms and peeking around corners to catch violators of the rule. This is not high school after all, we are a college.

Still, you can't control what people do in places such as their own cars, even when they are on campus. A quick walk from building to building between classes or a lunch break is going to be a time where people smoke anyway and there really isn't much anyone can do if people simply choose not to follow the ban. There is no sense in making a rule in the first place when it will be blatantly broken, quickly and often.

SPEAKING OF THE VIETNAM WAR, GUESS WHO, BACK IN THE DAY, AVOIDED THE DRAFT SO HE WOULDN'T HAVE TO GO THERE.



CUT and RUN

MCTcampus cartoon

NECC Observer

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# 14	Apr. 9	Apr. 2
# 15	Apr. 30	Apr. 23
# 16	May 7	Apr. 30

How to submit a letter to the Observer

The Observer welcomes letters from our readers. Letters for publication may be submitted via email, mail or by dropping off the letter at the newsroom, located in Rm. C-222 in the Spurr building.

All letters must be signed and also include a phone number for verification. Email submissions should include "Letter to Editor" in the subject line or risk not being received by the Observer email system.

We prefer submissions via email:
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But, if you wish to submit a letter via paper:

Letter to Editor, NECC Observer, 100 Elliot St., Haverhill, MA 01830

While we attempt to publish all letters, we reserve the right to edit or reject those received.

The NECC Observer is a member of the Associated Collegiate Press, College Media Advisers Inc., the Columbia Scholastic Press Association, and the New England Press Association.

Roaming Reporter

Who you want to win the party nominations and why?



Patrick Babik, Multimedia
"I don't know. I still haven't decided yet."



Kelsey Wood, Biology
"I don't even know as far as Democrats, probably Obama. As far as Republican, I can't say."



Tina Woodbury, Computer Tech
"Obama cause I don't want Hillary running this country."

Photos/Interviews by Hansel Lopez



Ashley Matos, Electronics Tech
"I'm not sure. I actually haven't followed up on it."



Kevin Guicho, Liberal Arts
"I don't follow politics. I'm aware, but I don't care about voting. In this country voting doesn't mean much, not with a two party system."



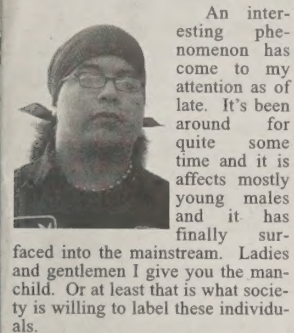
Josh Everett, Computer Science
"I want Barack to win because I'm a democrat and I don't like Hillary."

Opinion

The man-child

Do we just like to have fun or are we immature?

BY HANSEL LOPEZ
Opinions Editor



Until last year I don't even think there was a name for this movement, but it has grown in numbers and it can't be ignored. I'm not

exactly sure where the name came from but I do know the characteristics and signs of this epidemic event quite well.

The species is usually male and age ranges between late teens to late twenties some even in their thirties. His typical habitat is an apartment, basement or some kind of club or bar. He enjoys video gaming, binge drinking and recreational drug use. Female company is always appreciated especially if there is some kind of sexual activity involved, however marriage or any other type of serious commitment are frowned upon or feared. He spends most of his time with friends usually roommates or co-workers and is well versed in popular culture, cheesy action/comedy films and the latest gadgets. Why else would you think Halo 3, and Judd Apatow comedies were so successful?

To some people these may seem like the traits of a freeloader or somebody who never got around to moving out of their parents' house. Interestingly enough what separates the man-child from these characters is that he usually is self reliant. He works to pay his expenses, makes his own decisions and has moved

out. He is also likely to be intelligent and have a degree or know a trade.

So now that this lifestyle is so widespread, young men must ask themselves, if they are man-children. In my case I would have to say that I do meet most of the above mentioned requirements, therefore behind my serious journalist exterior I am a man-child. I am not ashamed and I'm really enjoying this phase of my life.

Why do we choose to live this way? Maybe it's because we view our parents and older siblings' life as boring and monotonous. They are too preoccupied with business and family affairs. Or perhaps it's because that our youth won't last forever and we're trying to cram as much playtime as possible in these last precious years. Or it is the ominous fear of having to grow up and settle down. I think it's all of the above, so my advice would be live your life however you want it and enjoy yourself as much as possible before fully choosing to become an adult. Enjoy it now because this illusion can't last forever, nobody wants to be a 40 year old Ferris Bueller.

LETTERS

NECC Observer hard at work

Dear Editor,

In the past year, I have discovered a great secret at NECC: the Observer every time it comes out. As a freelance writer for papers like the Haverhill Gazette, Eagle Tribune, and guest author for the Lowell Sun, I can state with no reserve the young writers at NECC are something to be proud of.

First, there was the letter by Julio Ortiz explaining how critical it is to embrace diversity and understanding with regard to the case of Ethan Santiago. The years of George Bush, the Christian conservatives and militant conservatives served only one thing: it has demonstrated to us the need for a more liberal society based on accommodating all viewpoints, sexual orientations, and religious preferences. These Republican years amplify the need for a country willing to embrace differences rather than stifle debate and call those who are moderate or liberal 'treasonous' as Bush and his Christian conservatives tried to do.

Then there was the writing of a local author seen frequently in local regional newspapers, Dante Ippolito, who described himself as a former Haverhill School administrator. As an elder statesman, Mr. Ippolito examines the sophomoric remarks of a certain Christine Ribiero and teaches her, we hope, that women's reproductive rights to an abortion must remain legal. I, for one, am completely disheartened when I see young women who will not support women's reproductive rights to a legal abortion. For the most part, these young women have been manipulated by an irrational and superstitious religious right wing that wants nothing to do with children or anyone else.

There was the article by Hansel Lopez who brought a smile to my face when he wrote, "I still question what real-

ly goes on in that empty void this is President Bush's mind."

Hilarious, Mr. Lopez; I too have been wondering what goes on in George's mind, but, of course, one has to assume he has a brain in the first place. Remember: under a conservative government 'being brainy is bogus.' I would encourage Mr. Lopez to send his letter to the Eagle Tribune, a newspaper that now wants to crawl in the corner for supporting Bush. May we hope we never see a Republican like George Bush again. (Watch out, though, Mitt 'The S...t' Romney is right around the corner breathing down our necks.)

Lastly, there was the 'Holiday Horror' article by Aaron Foss debunking the religionists. Thanks, Mr. Foss, for explaining how religion is the number one cause for war along with patriotism, nationalism, and territorial expansion (stealing another's land). Eight years of Republicans prove it. I found Mr. Foss's article about the man on the sidewalks of Boston preaching 'Jesus Saves' to be delightful, most especially when he writes, that 'religion, Jesus, and the 2000 year old book of fables being far more responsible for more deaths than the Black Plague, Hitler, and handguns combined.' Good going!

George Bush, the Christian conservatives, Republicans in general, fascists and skinheads, and the American military in Iraq...ahh...makes one long to be an atheist, now doesn't it?

My congratulations to the entire Observer staff and its editor.

Sincerely,
Michael Vevs

Support for Ron Paul

To the Editor:

As our Presidential primaries are quickly approaching (and some have already gone past), the media seem to forget a key player in these elections due to his sometimes off-beat and unorthodox viewpoints. Ron Paul is a Libertarian/Republican congressman from Texas, but to just describe him as such is a disservice to his ideals, which should be given due examination. He is unique in that he voted against going into the War on Iraq. This would mean nothing if he was a Democrat people would merely say he was supporting partisan politics. But he lived above playing party games, and stood for his beliefs.

Who can we really trust to run this country? Mitt Romney? His beliefs change with the wind. Hillary Clinton; honestly, who isn't scared of her. John McCain he's well liked by many, but getting very old for a president. Mike Huckabee? Seems like an ok guy, but his past history is a little disturbing (the same could be said for Barack Obama). Even if you do like any of the previously mentioned, they all offer a "more of the same" mentality, continuously bickering and engaging in the primal popularity contest between Republicans and Democrats.

Ron Paul appears to be intelligent and honest, and has ideas for boosting our economy that actually make sense. For instance, he suggests that in order to lower gas prices, what we really need to do is stop the inflation of the U.S. dollar. He states that gas prices aren't necessarily going up, but in fact the U.S. dollar is becoming worth less (check

out comparing currency listings to support this). Inflation is controlled by the Federal Reserve, which is neither federal, nor a reserve. It's a private corporation of unelected people deciding how much our hard-earned money is worth, and since this money isn't even backed by the government in gold (as it used to be), it puts us in a very scary position. Ron Paul also seeks to abolish the IRS a rash idea, granted, but appealing to many. He also seeks to end the wasteful flow of government spending into the war on drugs a war that will never end by the steps we are taking at this point. In addition, Ron Paul sees the Patriot Act as a violation of personal privacy rights a sentiment many Americans adhere to. There's a simple beauty to his common-sense-based initiatives, and quite frankly, I believe he could be a successful leader in uniting rather than separating us as a nation.

In conclusion, I'm not asking you to vote for Ron Paul, although that would be appreciated. But as you form viewpoints on the 2008 Presidential Election, please give him the second thought that the media haven't. I know many Americans are disgruntled with voting, politics, etc, and I understand the concept that many entertain of voting being useless. But when people believe that, we've truly lost a democracy. If you don't want to vote, that's fine, but at least think the matter through.

Sincerely,
Tomas M. Bowling

QUOTES

"If there were no God, there would be no Atheists."

- G.K. Chesterton

"I believe in God, only I spell it nature."

- Frank Lloyd Wright

"If God lived on earth, people would break his windows."

-Jewish Proverb

"If only God would give me a clear sign! Like making a large deposit in my name in a Swiss bank."

-Woody Allen

"I always admired atheists. I think it takes a lot of faith"

-Diane Frolov

The more I study religions the more I am convinced that man never worshipped anything but himself."

-Sir Francis Burton

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Opinion

Hollywood and its addictions

Celebrities are not immune to addiction and its pitfalls

By JUSTIN AGUIRRE
Contributing Reporter

We see them walking along our city streets. We hear about them on the news, maybe we have that one "black sheep" family member who doesn't come around much anymore — they are the ones lost into the world of drug and alcohol abuse. Drug addiction affects people from all walks of life and though at times they are looked down upon with a shameful eye. For decades our most beloved celebrities and musicians have fallen victim to this disease.

The tragedy of Heath Ledger's death was felt around the world, people gasped as the Oscar-nominated actor lost his life, alone in his apartment with prescription pills surrounding him. Actor Brad Renfro, only 25 years old, passed away after years of struggling with addiction and who can forget Anna-Nicole Smith, a walking time bomb who met her fate months after giving birth to a baby girl.

We watch them on TV, we

buy their music, read about them in magazines, follow their every move, yet when they die we shake our heads in disbelief. It can be hard to grasp the fact that the most successful, wealthy, good looking people let themselves slip away. The truth is the disease of addiction doesn't discriminate; it will eat you alive whether you're rich and famous, or poor and homeless.

Just last week superstar rap artist Lil' Wayne was arrested in Arizona after a search of his tour bus turned up large quantities of cocaine, marijuana, and ecstasy. Wayne's songs are riddled with drug content, his last big hit was a song called "I Feel like Dying" an ode to the suicidal feelings one feels when coming off of drugs. However, on numerous websites and blogs people are quick to comment on the story, yet not one person has mentioned the fact that he may have a drug problem — will they start when it is too late?

Amidst the tabloids, drug arrests, and overdoses clouding Hollywood, a new show on VH1 called "Celebrity Rehab with Dr. Drew" aims to bring the madness into the spotlight. Eight celebrities check into a California rehab with their every move being

filmed. It is at times hard to watch, some with issues dealing only with marijuana, and some, such as Jeff Conaway of "Taxi" fame, detoxing from opiates,

been sober for many years. Famed guitarist Eric Clapton stays sober a day at a time, and has even opened a rehab facility which has housed various celebrities seeking treat-

their old lifestyles, while we flap our gums and gossip about their latest bout with drugs and alcohol — it's a vicious cycle. An addict once told me: "Sometimes someone must close their eyes, for others to open theirs." When a young River Phoenix walked into a Hollywood nightclub and left in a body bag, my eyes opened.

In the end, any addict trying to get sober must want to change. I imagine it is difficult for a celebrity to separate themselves from the ongoing partying and outgoing people Hollywood is filled with. It's always fun in the beginning — it's when they don't know how to stop, and end up dying alone that it suddenly becomes real. Overcoming drug addiction is possible and has been done by other famed actors and musicians. The media is not always a positive tool, as a controversial story will always sell big. It's tiring to watch the endless coverage of Britney Spears plastered on every news station, for once I'd like to see a story of someone famous who sobered up, and how they did it — maybe that will be the step in the right direction America needs. All addicts have a chance to change their lives — it's up to them to take it.

“
Celebrities are a thriving breed amongst pop culture, as we devilishly follow their every move, yet money and fame cannot protect them from an addiction to drugs and alcohol.

cocaine, and benzodiazepines. We see the sickness and the pain that co-exists with drug addiction. Any one of these eight celebrities could have come close to meeting the same fate as Heath Ledger. But as Dr. Drew points out in the first episode, the chances of even half of them staying sober are slim.

Oftentimes we hear only of the negative trials and tribulations of the rich and famous, because controversy sells, yet there are many whom have overcome addiction. All the members of the classic rock group Aerosmith have

ment over the years. Even rocker Slash of Guns N Roses recently wrote a memoir detailing his most wild years of drug and alcohol abuse, and how he overcame its deadly grip.

Celebrities are a thriving breed amongst pop culture, as we devilishly follow their every move, yet money and fame cannot protect them from an addiction to drugs and alcohol. Fancy private rehab centers and tropical get always taken by the likes of Lindsay Lohan and Britney Spears achieve nothing, as they enter back into

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In a democratic society, is that right?

Original graphic by The Telegraph, Nashua, N.H.



For more information, visit www.SunshineWeek.org

CAMPUS BRIEFS

2008 Scholarship applications now available

The 2008 General Scholarship Application is available now at the Welcome/Express Desk at both Haverhill and Lawrence campuses and online at www.necc.mass.edu/scholarship.

Last year over \$150,000 was awarded. Funds have been raised through the generous donations from alumni, faculty, staff, and community friends.

The application deadline is April 2.

Red Cross to hold blood drive at NECC

The American Red Cross is holding a blood drive on Feb. 20, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Haverhill Campus. The drive will be in the Technology Center, in TC103B, and is open to the public.

Donating blood saves lives. More than 30 percent of blood donations come from community sponsored blood drives such as the NECC drive.

Donors may sign up in advance to avoid waiting. Sign up for any time each quarter hour by contacting Cynthia Therrien at 978-556-3447 or cytherrien@necc.mass.edu.

Donors must be at least 17 years old, weigh at least 110 lbs., and in good general health. Donating blood consists of four steps: your medical history, a quick mini-physical (temperature, blood pressure, and iron level), the donation itself, and snacks. Donating blood rarely hurts.

The NECC Administrative Association (NECCAA) and the Student Engagement Center are sponsoring the drive.

To learn more about blood donation call 1-800-GIVE-LIFE or visit the American Red Cross at www.givelife.org.

Gift cards being collected on campus for fire victims

Would you like to help victims of the Lawrence fires, but can't find time to donate?

Gift cards from local businesses (Market Basket, Target, CVS etc.) are being collected on campus to help.

If you would like to assist in the efforts to bring comfort to the victims, please purchase a gift card of \$10 and drop of your donations to one of the following locations by Feb. 8:

Haverhill Campus-
CJ Crivaro C314B
Meredith Gunning C314

Lawrence Campus-
Lynn Ricketts L-010

Does your campus organization or office have something to announce in Campus Briefs? Please e-mail information to observer@necc.mass.edu. Be sure to include "campus news brief" in the subject line.

NECC student loses home

NECC student loses Habitat for Humanity home in Lawrence fires

BY ROBIN CZIFRIK
Contributing Reporter

While city and state officials plan the clean up and the rebuilding process of the Jan. 21 Lawrence fire site, fire victims work on rebuilding their lives. And those who have lost everything - those whose spirits were scorched in the blaze - must now sift through the ashes in an attempt to salvage, at the very least, a bit of hope.

NECC student Ruthie Reyes is one of them.

The Reyes family was just days away from moving into their new Habitat for Humanity home on Market Street when the fire ripped through the neighborhood and destroyed their dream.

She says the reality of the loss comes in waves, that there are times when she feels she's dreaming and will wake to find her home not in shambles.

But she knows it's real, because she and her son Felix had watched it burning on television that morning from their Tenney Street apartment. "I was watching it and I couldn't believe myself," she said.

36-year-old Reyes had put her heart and soul into that home - and much time. She had spent more than 700 hours helping to renovate the single-family home each Saturday with about 13 to 20 volunteers. "Everything inside was totally redone," said Reyes. "It needed a lot of work."

She said she worked on just about every type of project at one time or another - tiles, measuring, insulation, drywall "and mixing cement, I did that one day," she said.

Reyes recalls the last Saturday she had been at the house when there was nothing left to do. The house was finally finished. "You can't find words to describe it," she said. She couldn't wait to wait to move in. "I had started packing last summer," said Reyes.

Reyes had qualified for a Habitat for Humanity home three years ago and the family felt as though they'd



Robin Czifrik photo

The Habitat for Humanity sign stands in front of the burnt out buildings.

won the lottery. "I was so happy," she said.

While the whole family struggles to deal with the devastation, Reyes says her 16-year-old son Felix has been hit the hardest because he'd been working on the home. Last year, he couldn't wait until his birthday, when he'd finally be old enough to contribute to his family's dream. "He worked on the house the very first Saturday after turning 16," Reyes said. "It was so special because he's the only one that could go. He was so excited."

While Reyes is heartbroken, she is also grateful. "I thank God we were not there," she said.

Reyes, the mother of four, is working toward an Elementary Education degree at NECC. Her heart is set on teaching third and fourth graders. "I like to work with younger children, I've been working with them so long," she said.

Reyes works full-time at the Arlington Elementary School in Lawrence as a special education paraprofessional. She said that during the years of renovation, her co-

workers checked in with her for weekly progress updates. "They were so happy for me, so proud," said Reyes. "At work, people have been so supportive."

Two other Habitat homes were also destroyed in the blaze - a two-family home that was near completion and a larger building that would eventually be home to four families.

Larry Sharp, executive director of the Merrimack Valley Habitat for Humanity, feels badly for the Reyes family. "I would say that Ruthie and her husband worked very hard building that house. It has been an enormous disappointment. We're going to work as quickly as possible to get this solved for them," said Sharp.

Sharp says the Reyes family has been given the option to purchase another Habitat home, which is located on Gale Street and close to completion.

Though Reyes is grateful for the opportunity to buy the Gale Street home, she knows it just won't be the same. Because it isn't just about a house - it's about the house. "It's your hopes, your smile, your memories.

That's the value that it had. It's special. I was so proud of that house," she said.

Sharp says it's going to take up to two years to rebuild the Market Street homes destroyed in the blaze because this time it won't be a renovation project - they'll need to start building from the ground up. "We hope it won't take that long, but we have to allow that much time for the regulatory process," said Sharp.

Reyes also has the option to wait for her home to be rebuilt. "But it will never be the same no matter how they build it. It will never be the same house," she said.

For now, Reyes will deal with her heartbreak one moment at a time. And it helps her to know that people care. "I learned that sometimes, even when you don't think people notice, they do feel your pain," she said.

The two-family home that was destroyed was to be the home of Tshibamba Mbiye, his wife, and their six children.

"I was looking forward to being neighbors," said Reyes.

Red Cross helps victims

Volunteers assist in the aftermath of Lawrence fires

BY ROBIN CZIFRIK
Contributing Reporter

The American Red Cross of the Merrimack Valley has been working double time. The local chapter, located in Ward Hill, responded to 19 fires in January alone - many involving multiple families.

A total of 54 Red Cross volunteers helped with the Jan. 21 Lawrence fire relief effort - staffing the shelter, providing counseling and casework and food. "It's more than being on scene that morning," said Jamie Devlin, interim director of the Merrimack Valley Chapter of the American Red Cross.

On the morning of the fire, Devlin

had multiple disaster relief teams working with evacuees. One of the sites was the Cor Unum Meal Center in South Lawrence. "They were fantastic. Cor Unum opened up their doors for us and we transported 40 people there so they were able to warm up and get a bite to eat," she said.

Other relief teams were also in Lawrence that morning - one serving as a canteen service, offering hot drinks and food to fire fighters, while the other group set up shelter at the Lawrence East School - where the group at Cor Unum was moved.

He said of the 25 Lawrence families that were put up in hotels by the Red Cross only a few remain. He expects that all families will have found more permanent housing by the end of this week.

Devlin also said they are giving each family about \$2000 to pay the first and last months rent for their new apartment.

According to Devlin a Haverhill fire this past December affected almost

20 families who needed assistance from the Red Cross. He said although the fire didn't consume nearly a whole city block as did the Jan. 21 Lawrence blaze, the magnitude was still there.

His chapter also provided relief for victims of a recent fire in Lowell that involved about 14 families. He said that Lawrence, Lowell, and Haverhill has many fires, likely due to the older buildings.

His office is currently working with many families effected by all of these fires and more - 21 from the Market Street Lawrence blaze alone. Devlin said that although it's a huge disaster for the city of Lawrence, his chapter had no problem with relief efforts. "We have a lot of experience dealing with these types of disasters so it wasn't a stretch. We were able to respond," said Devlin.

Devlin has been the interim director of the Red Cross' Merrimack Valley Chapter in Ward Hill, Mass. for about 18 months but is in his seventh year with the Red Cross. He spent five

years as a disaster relief volunteer in western Massachusetts.

"It's gratifying. It's why people do it. You don't get into nonprofit for the money, you get into it to give back," Devlin said. "It's my seventh year doing this. I am constantly amazed at the generosity I see. Communities come together in times of disaster," he said.

The Red Cross relies on donations of time and money and provides shelter, food, counseling and other services to victims of disaster.

"We always need volunteers," he said. His chapter currently has 314 registered volunteers that do everything from assist with local and national disasters, to office work and CPR instruction.

"Anybody who is interested in giving their time to the Red Cross, we'll find a job for you," Devlin said. Jamie Devlin, interim director of the American Red Cross, Merrimack Valley Chapter, may be reached at 978-372-6871.

News

National News



Compiled by the Observer staff
from AP wire reports

NYC judge throws out Jello-wrestling lawsuit

NEW YORK (AP) There's no room for this Jell-O wrestling lawsuit.

A Manhattan judge has thrown out \$1 million suit against New York University by a former student who claimed he broke his hip at a Jell-O wrestling dorm party.

Avram Wisnia was an NYU junior in 2004 when he and his dorm mates organized a party called "Beach Bash." While horsing around a kiddie pool filled with gelatin, Wisnia was pushed and shattered his hip, his lawsuit said.

Wisnia's 2005 lawsuit blamed NYU for allowing the event and for having the school's food service provide the gelatin. But Manhattan

Justice Carol Robinson Edmead ruled that Wisnia knew what he was doing.

NYU spokesman John Beckman said, "This case broke the mold but in the end justice was served sweetly."

Court upholds dismissal of same-sex family talk suit

BOSTON (AP) - A federal appeals court has upheld the dismissal of a lawsuit filed by Lexington parents who objected to same-sex families being discussed in their children's elementary school classrooms.

In a ruling Thursday, the 1st U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals agreed with a judge who found that parents' rights to exercise their religious beliefs are not violated when their children are exposed to contrary ideas in school.

Tonia and David Parker of Lexington sued after their son brought home a book from kindergarten that depicted a gay family.

Another couple joined the suit after a second-grade teacher read the class a story about two princes falling in love.

Convicted molester seeks reinstatement as lawyer

BRIDGEPORT, Conn. (AP) - A former Stamford lawyer who has spent time in prison for molesting children is seeking reinstatement of his law license.

Jonathan Rapoport, convicted of molesting three boys in the 1990s, Monday asked a special panel to restore his law license.

Under questioning by the Standing Committee for Admission, Rapoport admitted that in addition to the three children he was convicted of molesting, he had molested another three or four children since the 1970s.

The panel members will make a recommendation to a three-judge Superior Court panel on whether to allow Rapoport to resume practicing law.

The 54-year-old Rapoport served a three-year prison term and is currently on probation.

Lawrence fires

Continued from Page 1

Even with additional fire crews, single digit temperatures and the sub-zero wind-chill factor made fighting the rapidly-spreading fire much more difficult.

The Lawrence police mobile command station and an American Red Cross canteen truck provided warmth, hot beverages and food to the police and firefighters.

About 40 evacuees from Market, Parker, and Springfield streets were taken to the Cor Unum Meal Center to keep warm and eat a hot meal while they waited to hear if their homes were still standing. They were later taken to a Red Cross shelter at the Lawrence East School.

By the end of it all, the fire had ripped through half a city block of mostly triple-deckers, leaving 14 buildings damaged or destroyed and about 200 homeless. In all, 25 families were left without a place to live.

EMTs Christopher Baker and

Brian Perndergrast first spotted the fire on the corner of Parker and Market streets and immediately called it in. Both received official citations from Mayor Sullivan on the city's behalf. "I think they're the reason everyone got out safely," he said. "For the heroic efforts on Jan. 21 2008...the city of Lawrence salutes you," said Sullivan.

Habitat for Humanity lost three homes in the Market Street fire - a completed single-family, a two-family near completion, and another large building which would eventually become home to four families.

The property belonged to Lawrence Pumps, Inc., until 2004, when company owner Paul Reddick donated the land to Habitat for Humanity. To help with relief efforts, Reddick and his 130 employees donated \$25,000 to the American Red Cross last week.

Jamie Devlin, interim Director of the Merrimack Valley Chapter of the American Red Cross, says he is quite grateful for the kindness and generosity shown by Reddick and the Lawrence Pump employees, and that community response has been amazing. He said on the night of the fire their six phone lines were "going crazy" with calls from people wanting to help. He came into work the following morning to a nearly full answering machine. "People come together in times of

disaster," Devlin said.

Larry Sharp, director of the Habitat for Humanity, said many people have called asking to help rebuild. "We're going to put those people to work as quickly as we can and getting results as quickly as we can," he said. He also thanked the city for its continued support. "There has never been a time that we'd call for help and didn't get it," said Sharp.

At the conference, the mayor also voiced his gratitude to the community - whose compassion and generosity has not wavered, as donations of money, food, and clothing continue to pour in. "There's been over \$200,000 that's been raised and delivered to this city. They don't even know who these people are," said Sullivan.

Lawrence organizations who have worked tirelessly to help the victims rebuild their lives were also thanked by the mayor - the American Red Cross of the

ing food, furniture, household items, and money for the evacuees.

Community response at the drop-off has been overwhelming. According to Andre Gonzalez, program organizer for YouthBuild Lawrence, the amount of donations pouring in was incredible when he and a group of about 30 helped out there last week. "I was glad to be there," he said.

The Eagle-Tribune has also stepped up, reopening its Santa Fund as the Fire Fund to raise money for the American Red Cross. According to Irene Carver, office manager of accounting at the Eagle-Tribune, this is the first time in history the fund has been opened other than Christmastime. "The response has been excellent. Just excellent," she said. As of Sunday, Feb. 4, the Fire Fund has raised about \$80,000.

The city speculates a property damage bill of about \$4,000,000 - a tab which does not include anything that was lost by the 200 evacuees,

who will have to start from scratch. This is why donations are needed.

The fire still remains "suspicious." Because the site of the fire's origin was so badly destroyed, it has

been difficult to determine the exact cause. The blaze began in the old Millennium nightclub, which was under renovation for the past few months. The three-story building, owned by Geraldo Torres of Methuen, was located on the corner of Parker and Market streets. It was uninsured.

Massachusetts Governor Deval Patrick and Congresswoman Niki Tsongas have both visited the site and pledged their ongoing support. Tsongas has followed through on her pledge, so far, meeting with the mayor a number of times since the fire.

"We have seen tremendous generosity and compassion on the part of the Lawrence community and the surrounding communities in the Merrimack Valley, to help friends and neighbors in their time of need. The actions taken by city leaders, nonprofit organizations, and ordinary citizens to help address the victims' immediate needs by extending shelter, food, clothing, and friendship," she said. "The spirit of community will be a tremendous asset as we move forward with the rebuilding process."

We have seen tremendous generosity and compassion...

-Niki Tsongas

Merrimack Valley, Lazarus House, the Psychological Center, Neighbors in Need, Emmaus House, Greater Lawrence Community Action Council, the Trauma Intervention Program of the Merrimack Valley and others. These organizations will help the victims every step of the way.

According to the mayor, there is still much to be done. He announced the formation of a committee represented by the organizations who will continue working with the victims to help determine "how to get money to the people that really need it." Committee members include Bridget Shaheen, director of Lazarus House Ministries, Isabel Melendez, and Delilah Rivera - both of the Greater Lawrence Community Action Council (GLCAC).

"We're still reaching out to people that need a place to live," said Sullivan. The Red Cross states they are hopeful that all families will have more permanent housing by the end of this week.

He also announced that the city has set up a donation drop-off site at the old Saunders School on South Broadway in Lawrence, and is seek-

World News



Compiled by the Observer staff
from AP wire reports

Ghandi anniversary mostly forgotten

NEW DELHI (AP) - Across the street from the house where Gandhi was shot and killed 60 years ago stands India's National Defense College, an institution that certainly would have troubled the icon of nonviolence.

It's not the only thing that would have disturbed Gandhi about today's India - a rising economic and military power that barely paused to mark the anniversary of his assassination, an indication of how little influence his ideology still wields here.

That's not to say Gandhi has been forgotten in this country of 1.1 billion people - he's still considered by most the moral conscience of the nation and pictures of his wizened, smiling face are everywhere.

Gandhi's vision of India's Hindu majority and Muslim minority living in peace - a vision for which he was gunned down by a Hindu extremist - has also largely been realized, despite sporadic violence between the communities. India, in fact, has had two Muslim presidents.

But it's also a nation where inequality is as often as conspicuous as consumption - a country that's minting tens of thousands of new millionaires each year but remains home to about a third of the people in the world living on less than US\$1 a day.

"Gandhi is, in many ways, very inconvenient to modern India," said Pratap Bhanu Mehta, president of the Center for Policy Research.

"I just think he set an impossible standard - no country, not even India, can live up to Gandhi, to his ideals," said Tilak Menon, an engineering student. "What is so wrong about wanting the nice car, the good music system, the iPod, the modern house?" he continued.

Then there is India's military. At 1.1 million men and women, it is one of the world's largest and is backed by nuclear weapons, an arsenal regarded by the country's leaders and many ordinary citizens as a key to India's ambitions of becoming a global power.

"India projecting power on the world stage would also be an anathema to Gandhi," Mehta said.

Last week's commemorations were modest - his great granddaughter scattered some of his ashes in the Arabian Sea after a procession through the streets of the city that attracted about 300.

Following his death in 1948, Gandhi's ashes were sent to villages and towns across India for memorial services by his followers.

President Patil and Prime Minister Singh laid floral wreaths at a memorial where he was shot months after leading India to independence from Britain in 1947.

Elsewhere, few took notice of the day. India's TV news channels gave the anniversary a few minutes. Newspapers buried the stories on inside pages, covering front pages with stories that surely would have distressed Gandhi.

Yet even in today's India, with its roads choked by new cars and its malls and factories, there are those who skip out of work early to pay their respects to the man known by everyone here as the Mahatma, or great soul.

If Gandhi hadn't preached and struggled against Hindu nationalism "who knows where we could be now?" said Siddiq Khan, a 52-year-old Muslim business owner.

Car accident on campus



Security Log

With the help of Eagle Security, this security log has been released to inform students and staff about the incidents requiring assistance of Eagle Security at the NECC campuses in Haverhill and Lawrence.

This log covers events from both Haverhill and Lawrence cam-

puses from Jan. 14 to Jan. 31.

Jan. 23, 2008 - Car accident in front of the Haverhill campus library. No injuries reported.

Jan. 23, 2008 - Car and fender damaged at Amesbury Street campus.

Genocide series

NECC to hold genocide awareness events

By AARON FOSS
News Editor



In this modern era the fact that genocide is still an everyday occurrence is almost unfathomable. Always on the forefront of politics, this semester several members of the NECC community are working to inform and educate on the subject of genocide.

The NECC Diversity Committee along with several faculty members will help undertake this endeavor, helping to sponsor several events relating to the issue.

A speaker series will bring several guest speakers to the college to discuss their individual struggles with genocide.

Sayon Soeun will discuss his childhood as a genocide orphan while working in the camps of the Khmer Rouge.

Human rights activist and Holocaust survivor, Sonia Schreiber Weitz, will address her struggle to survive through five Nazi camps, including Auschwitz and Bergen-Belsen.

In March, the series will feature Richard Kamber, Professor of Philosophy at the College of New Jersey, who will discuss the role democracy plays in dealing with genocide.

The Top Notch Players will perform "The Diary of Anne Frank" as their annual spring production with American College Theater Festival (ACTF) nominee Kim Cote in the title role. The play focuses on the 25 month stay the Jewish teenager had to ordeal when her family went into hiding in the annex above her father's business office. As the Holocaust progresses, Frank begins to pen her now famous diary as she struggles to deal with the war outside and her seven forced roommates as they all await liberation. "The Diary of Anne Frank" opens on March 28.

Professors Stephen Slaner and Andrew Morse will present a film series focusing on the Holocaust, as well as genocide in more contemporary settings such as Cambodia and Darfur. Professor Slaner made it clear that his views do not necessarily reflect those of Professor Morse, or the main theme of the film series.

"My own involvement in this film series reflects a 50-year history of activism against nuclear weapons. I feel strongly that any use of nuclear weapons against civilian populations is genocide, or at least incipient genocide, certainly a crime against humanity. So I would like to extend the theme of genocide to cover nuclear weapons and the possibility of nuclear holocaust. I hope these films will get students to think about the implications of genocide — why it's happening and what can be done to stop it," said Slaner.

In addition to events on campus, several instructors are becoming involved by working genocide related material into their coursework. Some English Composition and Writing classes are focusing on racial inequality and intolerance by linking writing assignments together to genocide. Journalism students will also be focusing on how propaganda in the media

has helped lead to genocide, as well as how journalists go about covering the subject.

Professor Steve Russell will be discussing the expulsion of Native Americans in America in his American History I and II classes, focusing on King Philip's War, the removal of the Cherokee nation on the Trail of Tears, and the post-Civil War establishment of reservations.

"Genocide has to be planned. With the Pequot, were the English deliberately trying to destroy the Native Americans and their culture or trying to move them? If you're trying to kill the person but not the culture, is that genocide? That is a question we will be asking," said Russell. "It's painful to think that maybe in America, it happened here too," Russell added.

With genocide still prevalent in modern times, the series will bring much-needed focus not only to the genocide of the past, but how it may be dealt with in the future. People involved with the series find this to be highly important.

"It follows that for me, the real issue today is preventing nuclear war, which would definitely constitute genocide under my definition. Strengthening the UN and limiting the power of nation-states is for me a positive idea. But in order to really stop genocide, including the possibility of omnicide, a change in our consciousness is necessary," said Slaner.

"We must always be on the lookout. The world has to be aware it can happen anywhere, that is why we have to study it," said Russell.

A website has been created to provide the NECC community with additional resources. The site features campus event schedules, as well as other genocide resources and can be found at: http://cit.necc.mass.edu/ofsd/genocide_resources.shtml

Man returns to see burnt home

Rhode Island man returns to see burnt childhood home

By ROBIN CZIFRIK
Contributing Reporter

Imagine going back to the place of your youth only to find it in shambles. While many Market Street residents feel they've lost their future, James Surprenant of Lincoln, RI feels he has lost his past.

Surprenant grew up here in the '70s.

He acknowledges what he feels is surreal as he stands in front of the fenced-in rubble on Market Street — which resembles more of a war zone than a neighborhood where the children played street hockey and games of tag until the streetlights came on.

Without much to go on visually but the rubble in front of him, he relies on his childhood memories to help him show just how it used to be here. "It was a great neighborhood back in the '70s," he said.

Surprenant drove from Rhode Island because he had to see it for himself before it was all torn down. "It was a shock seeing it on the news," he said. "I was blown away."

Miraculously, the third-floor apartment where he lived with his parents is still standing — though quite damaged and awaiting its gloomy fate.

His mother had grown up next door — in a three-family home that has been utterly destroyed. Throughout his own childhood, Surprenant had different friends living there. "I spent a lot of time in that house over the years," he said.

He points down the road to his right, smiles and says, "When I was a kid that was Charlie's barbershop. I got my first haircut there. It was other things too, after that, but I really remember the barber shop."

The site of barbershop was where the fire had started — in the old Millennium Nightclub, which was under renovation. In a few months there would have been a new restaurant with apartments upstairs. To Surprenant, it would always be the barbershop.

Now in his forties, Surprenant lived on Market Street until after he graduated from NECC with an Associates degree in Business. His grandfather, Matthew Dziadosz, sold the family home in the '90s.

"Everything is so different now," he said. "I've lost a lot lately. My grandfather died just over a month ago. He lived on the first floor and they always rented the second floor out."

"You feel a connection to where you grew up," he said. Surprenant ends the conversation and stares through the fence.

It must be really tough to pick up the pieces when so many of them are missing.

College to possibly ban smoking

President Hartleb contemplates measure to ban smoking

By DANIEL A. POTOCKI
Editor in Chief



Could the school soon be facing a campus wide ban on smoking? Perhaps. At the last Management Association

school property, including the areas currently designated as smoking zones.

Hartleb state at the meeting that the purpose was to make the College a healthier place and to avoid complaints about second hand smoke.

"It would improve the health of the people on campus, smokers and non-smokers alike," stated Hartleb in an interview with the Observer.

"If I wanted to be healthy I wouldn't smoke," said Nicole Groksy when asked about how she felt about the potential ban.

"That is taking away our rights," added Jessica Legere.

“
For the health of the people on campus, smokers and nonsmokers.

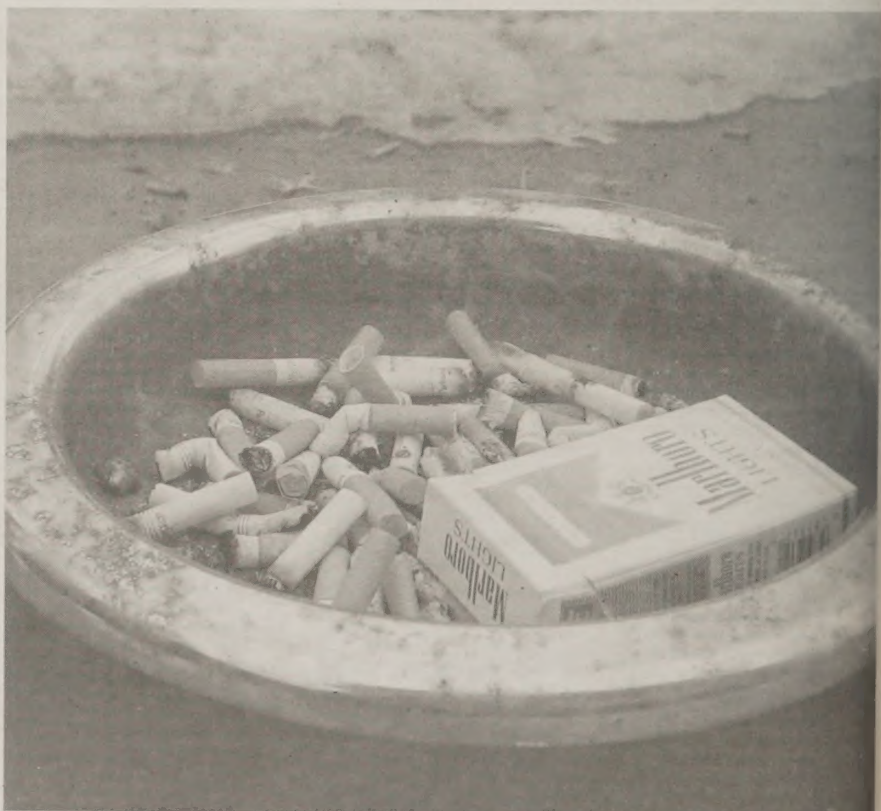
-College President David Hartleb

Committee for Employee Relations (MACER) meeting college President David Hartleb stated that he was considering a measure to prohibit smoking anywhere on the campus.

If put into effect the measure would ban smoking anywhere on

Security Guard Rich Foucault had a much different view on the subject.

"That's super," Foucault said with enthusiasm, "That is less hassle for security. I am a smoker but I can wait all day, so maybe others should try it."



Soon enough ash trays could be a thing of the past here at NECC.

Nick Sermuknis photo

Features

Multi-talented student passionate about the arts

First-year acts, sings, and dances.

BY ARTEMIS SAVORY
Features Editor



Last semester she acted in "A Midsummer Night's Dream", sang a solo in chorus, and joined the dance club

in an act on performance night. It's quite obvious that Orlik Guzman has done a lot in her first semester at Northern Essex. How did she get through it all? "Patience. I just took my time with things," Guzman said.

It definitely helped that the practices for all the activities she was a part of occurred at different times.

Guzman sang opera at last semester's chorus performance. This semester she is taking Chorus

II and plans on participating in a duet with "Johnno" who also participated in last year's show. Guzman and her good friend Dan Potter sang "The Dark I know Well" at last semester's talent show. Potter, who says that he's known Guzman since his sophomore year of high school said,

backstage for this play, as she is on work-study with Professor Susan Sanders. Professor Sanders says "Orlik has talent as an actress, singer and dancer, but she has something worth much more—a willingness to work hard."

Working hard just seems to be one of Guzman's most-used

Orlik has talent as an actress, singer and dancer, but she (also) has . . . a willingness to work hard."

-Susan Sanders

"She is a lot of fun to hang out with. She has one of those personalities that you just fall in love with and she's just crazy talented." Potter was in both the play and chorus last semester.

Although she will not be acting in this semester's performance of "The Diary of Anne Frank," she says that she likes acting the most. "It's awesome to play roles," she says, "it's like being goofy onstage." Guzman will be working

traits. She took musical theatre at Whittier Technical High School for four years. There, she won a music academic award for appreciation, which she assumes she was given in recognition of her extreme dedication. While she was juggling all of last semester's responsibilities she was also helping with casting at the high school.

Orlik Guzman's major goal is to become an Italian chef.

She has been working at the



Artemis Savory photo

Orlik Guzman tries her hand at piano, although her talents lie more in theatre and singing.

Amesbury Playhouse for three years, where she also acts in the current play "Sizzle." Choosing a favorite play is hard for Guzman—so, she has two favorites; one extraordinary play, and a musical

play. The former "A Midsummer Night's Dream", and the latter, "Les Miserables." Her favorite song at this time is "King of the Frontier," by Adam and the Ants.

Community Outreach Group plans ahead already

Community Outreach plans student activities on campus.

BY ARTEMIS SAVORY
Features Editor

The Community Outreach Group (COG) met last week with posters and stuffed animals, boxes and bags, and a drive to create change. President Lucy Baldwin had also brought an assortment of tickets, tape, snowflakes and cut-

The group also met this past Monday, on Feb. 4. COG members were not, however, the only people in the room. Amnesty International members and students interested in joining GSA again, were also in attendance. The faculty advisor of Amnesty International, Mark Palermo, said, "... our mission is raising consciousness about suffering around the world," in relation to the genocide topic that is flooding through campus.

The talent show, which has



Artemis Savory photo

COG members: Vice President Stephanie McLean holds up a picture of the Lawrence fire devastation as President Lucy Baldwin speaks with a new member.

Wednesday, Mar. 24 at noon in lecture hall A of the Spurr building.

The Amnesty Club is currently collecting books, CDs and movies for a book sale sometime in March or April. These donations may be dropped off at faculty advisor Meredith Gunning's office at C314S.

The club also looks forward to a "Rock for Darfur" concert at the end of March, and possibly a dance before the end of the semester. The rock concert looks very possible, as it would be held outside, probably by the never-used stage in the courtyard between buildings B, E and C.

The dance does not look very promising, due mainly to the cost of hiring security guards and the lack of student participation.

Any student interested in joining GSA is welcome to any COG meeting. Meetings are held on Mondays at noon in room C108.

outs.

Stephanie McLean set right in to cutting pictures from a variety of newspapers, which she then pasted to a poster board. The pictures were of the burnt skeletons from the fire in Lawrence a couple weeks ago. The poster was hung up at last Wednesday's bake sale, where the group raised almost \$400. All proceeds went toward helping the victims of the fires.

been run by COG for the past two semesters, may receive help from Student Senate. The only concern of COG members is that the proceeds go toward a charity, which will very likely be "Doctors Without Borders", as they have in the past.

This year's talent show will be selling foods of some type, either pizza or baked goods, but no raffle will be held. The show will run

Our mission is raising consciousness about suffering around the world.

-Mark Palermo

Valentine's Day

Love

Love remains a constant for a young fellow with a big heart

BY NICK SERMUKSNIS
Alternative Edge Editor



I was sitting on a jetty with my girlfriend looking out at the ocean. I had my arm around her and she was pressed comfortably against my coat. We had been meaning for this moment to happen for some time, but it

wasn't until a spur of the moment decision that got us to this point. The breeze was putting up a good fight around us, but I personally wasn't focused on the chill running up my spine. She was beautiful to me. Whenever she looked up and I looked down, I saw a wild heart beating behind her eyes. It fascinated me and despite the pressing time constraint to get to work, I didn't want to leave that spot or her.

I don't want to dwell too much on existentialism, but love seems to be the force that binds us to this universe. It defines our existence, even if we don't want to accept it. There is love in everything we do. Even if you're not particularly pleased with a project forced upon you, there is love in the desire to get it done and go home to a comfortable bed. Love expands like our universe, where it can only get bigger. Even on the days we take the universe for granted, we do the same with love, but that doesn't make it any less important.

When I was younger, I was playing in the snow with an old neighborhood friend. A snowflake fell on her coat and she pulled it close to her eye and then extended it to me. She told me that you could see the details in the snowflake. Up until that point, I just thought that snow was clumped together and didn't hold much meaning except to make snowmen and cancel school. The closer I got to the single flake, the more I saw the effort put into it. Whether it was intelligent design or not, there was something beautiful about this one snowflake. It was unique, even when compared with the flurry going on around us. I found love in a snowflake, and it taught me to share that love with others.

Love should be expressed anywhere at any time. The more you think about it,

the more it becomes a thought process. Just let it flow, because if you're in the presence of the right person then nothing else matters. I have plenty of experience when it comes to unsuccessful romantic attempts, but it boils down to if you can roll with the punches and find love in the most unexpected situations.

We can agree that the physical feelings of love stem from chemical reactions in our brain, but through that science we've created an intricate poetry that is always evolving. Just like a person's accomplishments can become the values of future generations, love is always finding a new voice in anyone who finds it. It's become an art. An inspiration. A snowflake.

I wake up most mornings telling myself that it's going to be a good day. This isn't always the case, just like everyone else, but I still firmly believe by the time that I go to bed that it wasn't a total loss. That I've learned something, felt something special, that love made my day possible. That it gives me a purpose. Besides, if we didn't have purpose, then what's the point of being born?

It's the greatest feeling in the world to wake up to someone you love. It's the greatest feeling to know that there is someone out there thinking about you. If you believe that there isn't anyone in your life like that, look again. Love is more than a box of chocolates or going to the movies every weekend. Love is hope and if you have hope or someone who has brought hope to you then you're just as fortunate as the people who can change their relationship status on Facebook.

You can go through one relationship after another, but that doesn't make the time spent any less important. Always savor the feelings you have with everyone you're with, lover or otherwise. You can spend decades building something wonderful and then lose it in an instant. Always hold onto the feelings that put you on top of the world, because it'll be the only thing that can keep you warm while you're up there. When you get the chance, go to the person you love and hug them without consideration. Don't let them retaliate, because your compassion will become obvious. It doesn't have to be a boy or a girl, a husband or a wife. Hug your pet, dance around the room with your goldfish, or sit on your roof and gaze at the stars. There is love all around so don't deny it's existence.

It doesn't deny you.

QUOTES

"Falling in love consists merely in uncorking the imagination and bottling the common-sense.

-Helen Rowland

"A loving heart is the truest wisdom."

-Charles Dickens

"There is no instinct like that of the heart."

-Lord Byron



Valentine's Day



Hate

"Some call it love, I call it hell"

-Unknown

"Nothing spoils the taste of peanut butter like unrequited love."

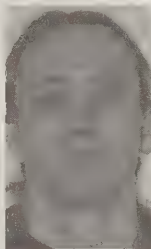
-Charlie Brown

"Passionate hatred can give meaning and purpose to an empty life."

- Eric Hoffer

Another commercialized holiday is meant to take your cash

BY NOAH MUSTIN
Contributing Columnist



Welcome to yet another highly commercialized holiday season folks. If your wallets were not drained enough during the Christmas season, they will be nearly completely drained soon enough. It's time to make another pilgrimage to the Temple of Commerce (The Mall), and tithe to the dark gods of commerce.

Much like Christmas, our conception of what Valentine's Day is has been spoon fed to us by the media. It is yet another religious holiday that has been totally purged of its significance. The story of St. Valentine is not all cutesy, flowery, and fully of red and pink hearts like we have been conditioned to believe.

It's a tragedy folks... I mean, really, people should read their history. It is a sad tale about a martyr during the Roman persecution of the Christians. St. Valentine, in order to save the woman that he loved, went to his death in her place. Now that's real love, and I assure you that you won't find anything like that on any Hallmark card. In fact, in my mind the things that I have read on greeting cards seem to have nothing to do with the notion of love at all, and I have to wonder if the people who write them have ever been in love themselves.

I want to see the Valentine's Day card that says: "Sorry honey that I got you pregnant... I love you... sort of..." This card will, of course, come with its own little sleeve on the inside that contains a gift certificate for the local abortion clinic. This would be a best seller amongst the mongrels of society, and probably would help keep the surplus population down at the same time, thus doing a great service for humanity!

It may sound very harsh of me to say such things, but realistically this is closer to how the majority of humanity thinks of love deep down. People also often confuse love with lust. Deep down men have an instinctual desire to mate, and they use the ruse of love to get what they desire the most. This, more often than not, results in grievous mistakes, one being pregnancy and two, a female who is looking for a commitment which rarely, if ever, is something a man is willing to give.

Real love is not all hearts and flowers folks, and behaving like a love sick puppy.

It's about pain and sacrifice, and unconditionally being there for someone no matter the circumstance. I digress though. Let's return to the true evil here: the dark gods of commerce. I've already crucified Hallmark, so I'll move onto to the true antichrist of every holiday season.

I'm sure you've all seen the TV, magazine, and radio commercials for jewelry stores. Nothing in my mind pollutes our notion of love than these minute and a half brainwashing blurbs. They all but say, "Hey, buy her the diamond and she'll do every nasty little thing that you've been begging her to do since day one."

However, I think the worst message that it sends is that love can somehow be bought. Ok, let's get this message out there right now and I hope you're paying careful attention to my -words: Love cannot be bought, well, not bought but you might be able to rent it for awhile.

I'm reminded of a good friend of mine who usually tells me things that I don't want to believe, but sadly I know tend to be true. Since we are polluted by these propaganda-like commercials, we end up living in a society where women expect men to shell out the cash, and men feel obligated to do so.

He once successfully argued the validity of prostitution to me, and though I mentally thrashed and tried to fight and rebuke this notion, I knew deep down he was onto to something. He asked me how much money I had recently spent on my girlfriend, and though I really hadn't thought of it up until that moment, I was shocked to realize it was in the thousands. Then he calmly explained to me that one can rent a French prostitute for a couple hundred bucks for a few hours, hence being much more cost effective, and with much less unwanted baggage.

So, for my gentleman readers out there who are in their relationships for the sole purpose of obtaining sex (you know who you are, and there are many of you), I suggest that you take my friend's advice. The obvious reason being that you will save a whole hell of a lot of money.

Not to mention they all have a "no glove no love" policy, so you won't have to worry about tying yourself down with the burden of an unwanted pregnancy.

Now, that being said, if you're truly prepared to love a woman and be in a relationship for the right reasons, don't fall prey to preconceived notions of how to express love this Valentine's Day. Show her that you love her by making some personal sacrifice, doing something that shows that you went out of your way to make her feel special.

It'll mean a lot more than some silly rock guys.

I just want to thank the woman that I love for editing this for me, and for just generally putting up with my insanity

All graphics from Amber Lucas

Piano music played by memory

David Alan Pihl gives a stunning performance

BY SARA CODAIR
Arts & Entertainment Editor



Volcanoes!
Atoms, Stars,
and Waves!
Random things
I can't pro-
nounce! Strung
together with
keys, chords
and notes.
David Alan
Pihl in recital

was a new exciting experience. Until Sunday, I had never been to a piano recital, played by a professional pianist.

So when I decided to go the Essex Chamber Music Players Fundraiser, I did not know what to expect. I didn't even know what to wear.

I have a basic knowledge of music, but its based more in musical theater and rock than piano, so I convinced my friend Dan Potter, who has been playing piano most of his life, to tag along. Honestly, I expected to be a little bored, but I was very, very wrong.

We walked into the multi-purpose room in the Tech Center, and took a seat. Even though we were at a campus, it looked like we were the only NECC students in the room.

"I just don't know how to get students to come anymore. When I taught here, I could tell my students about it and give them extra-credit for going, but its just hard to get young people interested in classical music," said Artistic Director Michael Finegold.

While we waited for the show to start people weren't really talking. The silence was eerie. I was glad when Finegold broke the silence with a spiel on why this concert was going to be a super concert, before the Super Bowl. The songs Pihl was going to play were written by three "super" composers, Robert Schumann (1810-1856), William Thomas McKinley (1938-) and Frederic Chopin (1810-1849).

When the recital finally started, I was blown away. Some pieces were fast, played at lightning speed, while others were gracefully slow and evoked daydreams of frolicking barefoot through meadows with soft green grass and purple flowers.

The best pieces of the night were

from the series of 24 Etudes by McKinley. The pianist, David Alan Pihl played 14 of the twenty-four etudes.

My favorites "Volcanoes" and "Stars." "Volcanoes" was an extremely intense piece that evoked images of violently erupting volcanoes, and Pihl played it with such intensity that I thought the piano was going to catch fire.

"Stars" was very different. It was a light, lively piece played on higher notes than volcanoes. Many of the keys were close together, creating music that really sounded how twinkling stars look.

As he played, Pihl got very into what he was playing. He didn't just play with his hands, but with his whole body. During the more intense moments, his whole body seemed to be vibrating on the same frequency as the strings in the piano.

"Do you know how hard it is memorize music?" exclaimed Potter as we walked out to the lobby during intermission. Since the most complicated piece I've ever had to memorize was something like "Mary Had a Little Lamb" I didn't really know, but he was impressed.

For the majority of the performance, Pihl had no sheet music. He played the entire first act from memory and only used sheet music when he got to McKinley's etudes, and once he was passed those, he played from memory alone.

McKinley's music is fairly new. The etudes premiered at Tanglewood last summer played by a different pianist and will soon be recorded by Pihl.

"This is just the beginning. Different pianists will interpret it different ways and I'm excited to see what it will grow into," said McKinley.

In addition to great music, there was food at intermission, and I don't mean the usual cookies and cupcakes. There was tuna, chicken salad, and turkey mini sandwiches as well as absolutely divine chocolate frosted brownies.

The overall show seemed to be a success and those responsible for it agreed.

"I had fun. It was definitely intense, but it had rewards," said Pihl. "The rewards are in giving something back to the audience, and they seemed to like it. I had a sense that they got something out of it."

Pihl has been playing since he was about 12 years old. "When my mother dragged me out of the trees and made me start playing piano, I wanted no part of it. However, in three years I was totally enthralled by it and have been so ever since,



Sara Codair photo

Pianist David Alan Pihl plays music composed by William Thomas McKinley at a fundraiser. Artistic Director Michael Finegold is turning the pages.



Sara Codair photo

A close up of Pihl's hands as he plays the etude "Hearts" from "Twenty-four Etudes" by William Thomas McKinley.

said Pihl.

Pihl has a Masters in Piano Performance from UMASS Lowell School of Music, and has performed in numerous concerts in Germany, The Czech Republic and at many colleges in the United States.

The biggest complaint anyone had about the recital was actually about the room, not the pianist.

"The acoustics were dry," said McKinley "But its still much better than the library."

“

The reward is in giving something back to the audience, and they seemed to like it.

-David Alan Pihl

Networks gear up for Super Tuesday

Super Tuesday is a big day for network television

BY DAVID BAUDER
AP Television Writer

NEW YORK (AP) The Super Tuesday presidential primaries this week top off an unexpectedly thrilling and profitable month for television news with a super mystery.

One day, primaries in nearly half of the states and two contested races it has never happened before, certainly not on this scale. November election nights are massive

undertakings, but networks generally know from experience what to plan for. This time, not so much.

While a headache for news executives, the people who cover politics for a living can't contain their glee.

This is just such a hell of a story," said CBS News "Face The Nation" host Bob Schaffner, happy he put off retirement to be a part of it.

News execs figured it would be an exciting political year. But they have made adjustments on the fly to capitalize on the intense public interest early on.

Nowhere will that be more evident than on Tuesday. All three broadcast networks long ago set aside an hour for a Super Tuesday wrap-up, but ABC decided to give its

entire prime-time to the story. CBS News doubled its commitment to two hours.

An ABC News-Washington Post poll taken last week found Americans nearly as excited about Super Tuesday (37 percent) as they were about the Super Bowl (40 percent). College graduates were more excited about the political contest, 53 to 33 percent.

CBS News' Jeff Greenfield dubbed 2008 the "Seinfeld election" because, until its bizarre finish, it seemed essentially about nothing. Remember when people said there really wasn't much difference between Al Gore and George W. Bush?

You don't hear that anymore because there's big stuff at stake," he said.

Arguably, more important issues will face the next president than at any time since he's been voting, said ABC News President David Westin, 55.

CNN's prime-time weeknight viewership in January leaped 39 percent from January 2007, according to Nielsen Media Research. Both CNN and MSNBC, which was up 33 percent, have aggressively promoted their political teams. Fox News Channel's viewership was essentially flat, up 4 percent.

"We're pleasantly surprised by the level of interest," said Jon Klein, CNN U.S. president. "We knew they'd be interested. We didn't know they'd be obsessed. We're obsessed, too, so that's a good match."

Looking for a way to compete against college football games on

New Year's Day, CNN created its "Ballot Bowl." The nonstop political coverage emphasized the candidates' own words, either in stump speeches or news conferences. Klein believes viewers are attracted to CNN's "aggressively independent" coverage.

The "Ballot Bowl" was such a hit that CNN continued it over January weekends and, last week, substituted it for the international newscast it normally runs weekdays at noon.

The challenge facing news organizations Tuesday is seeing how trends develop, or even if they do, with so many states involved. The delegate count is ultimately more important than the popular vote and, particularly with the Democrats, may take a painstaking

Arts & Entertainment

Cloverfield: hate it or love it

Cloverfield has plenty of action, but lacks a good storyline

By AARON FOSS
News Editor



Sometimes a movie just comes along that people are either going to absolutely love or completely despise with few people in the middle.

Cloverfield is one of those movies, and I found myself on the fence in regards to liking it.

I was completely ignorant of J.J. Abrams going in, having been one of the few people on the planet who hasn't seen an episode of *Lost*, nor really caring to. I was looking forward to seeing what all the hype about this guy was. One thing is for sure; the hype that this movie got was way too much. The internet campaign was obviously an attempt to get the movie a huge opening weekend gross, which was quite successful, but it also builds it to a point where you expect a lot from it and if it doesn't deliver you are left feeling disappointed. This is what happened with *Cloverfield* hype, people expected a lot and it didn't really deliver anything exciting or surprising. As the ending credits rolled I heard a "Wow" from behind me, while a kid in front of me asked his friend "That's it?"

while I was feeling a combination of both.

Cloverfield is shot from the perspective of a home video camera, ala *The Blair Witch Project*, and is the story of a group of friends gathering for a farewell party in honor of their friend Rob (Michael Stahl-David) who is leaving for a job in Japan. During the party, explosions and power outages occur leading everyone to flee from an unknown presence that is attacking New York City. Rob now embarks on a mission to get across the city among the military battles, looting, and monster attacks that the city is facing to rescue his estranged love. Along for the excursion are his brother Jason (Mike Vogel), and Jason's friends Marlena (Lizzy Caplan) and Hud (T.J. Miller). Hud is the one who gives us the firsthand account of the attack through his movie camera.

The film has gotten a lot of flack for the camerawork; the camera bobbles around a lot and people have actually gotten vertigo in the theater resulting in a few extra hours of work for the theater's janitorial crew. I don't have a problem with this part, I mean they are running from a monster and it looks exactly like it should in that respect. The main problem I had with the first-hand camera angle is that it's too much at times. When Hud is fending off attackers or scaling from the roof of one skyscraper to the other, the camera never leaves his eye. I myself would find it hard to scale onto a building with one hand. On one hand you have to suspend your sense of disbelief, it is a monster movie after all, but still at times the camerawork calls attention to its ridiculousness which took me out of the moment.

This film has also been compared to the horror classic *"The Blair Witch*



MCT Campus photo

Michael Stahl-David and Odette Yustman hide from a killer monster in Paramount Pictures action thriller "Cloverfield."

Project" because of its firsthand camcorder account perspective. That is the only thing it has in common and other than that the films aren't even in the same league. Unlike *BWP*, you know that some people are going to die in this film. That's another place *Cloverfield* fails. It spends too much time trying to get us to care about the characters. Ultimately in a monster movie, like a horror movie, you know that the characters in the film are simply "meat" for

whatever monster/killer/creature is out to off them one by one. So I got bored with the story trying to get me to care about the people in the film when you know the fate that awaits some of them.

Still I would recommend seeing this film. For all the things it does wrong, it does a lot of things right. The monster is the real star of this movie and if you like monster flicks this is a completely new perspective on it. At 84 minutes it doesn't drag either, the action

is plentiful and there are lots of guns and explosions, so if that's your cup of tea you're in for a great time as well. Don't go to this film expecting a cohesive plot or great storytelling because you'll be disappointed. Go and see it for the fact that whether it works or fails, it is a completely original concept and in Hollywood today, that alone makes it worth the trip.

Replace re-runs with sexy vampire mysteries

The perfect time of year to start reading the Southern Vampire Mysteries

By SARA CODAIR

Arts and Entertainment Editor



Winter is still in full force with icy cold weather, and the screenwriters are still on strike. Valentine's Day is around the corner, and romance, or a lack of it, is on people's minds. This combination makes it a good time of year to start reading Charlaine Harris' *Southern Vampire Mysteries*.

Anyone who is a fan of romance, mystery or fantasy can enjoy these novels, as they are a blend of all three genres. Once you read the first novel, *"Dead Until Dark"* you'll be sucked in, and dying to read the next book. There are seven published so far.

Each book is written in first person, told from the perspective of the telepathic barmaid, Sookie Stackhouse.

Sookie has as normal a life as a telepath can have living in the small Louisiana town called Bon Temps, until she meets Bill, a man whose mind she can not read.

It turns out that the reason she can't read his mind is because he is dead, or should I say "undead." Bill is a vampire and her relationship with him will change her life forever.

Falling in love with Vampire Bill introduces many new things into Sookie's life: sex, danger, romance, excitement and dead bodies left and right.

Vampires aren't the only "supes" or supernatural beings in this book. There are also werewolves, shifters, fairies, witches, goblins and demons.

As Sookie's involvement with the supernatural community deepens, she finds more men interested in her (none of them plain vanilla humans), and her once simple life becomes more complicated, and more dangerous.

Sookie is such a believable and realistic character, minus her disability, so it is very easy for the reader to suspend his or her belief in the supernatural.

Sookie is not the only realistic character. There are many human characters in Bon Temps that could be found in any real small town in America. The Werewolves and Shifters are entirely human personalities, and the vampires are just alien enough to fill their role in the story, but human enough to be likeable.

The fact that the narrator is a telepath sets this novel apart from others written in the first person. Usually with a first person narrator, the reader only knows what the narrator is thinking, unlike with third person. However, because of Sookie's condition, she is constantly hearing the thoughts of other characters (except for the vampires) so you get a broader perspective on the story.

Harris has also included the classic themes of prejudice and discrimination by allowing the existence of vampires to be known to humans, and using the human's reactions to them to deal with these issues.

So whether you want something to replace your favorite television show on a cold night, or something with a bit of romantic flair to read during the Valentine's season, pick up a copy of *"Dead Until Dark"* and dig in. Before you know it, you'll be counting down the days until May, when book 8, *"From Dead to Worse"* is released.

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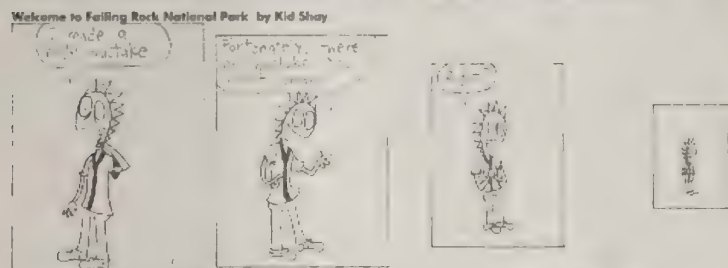
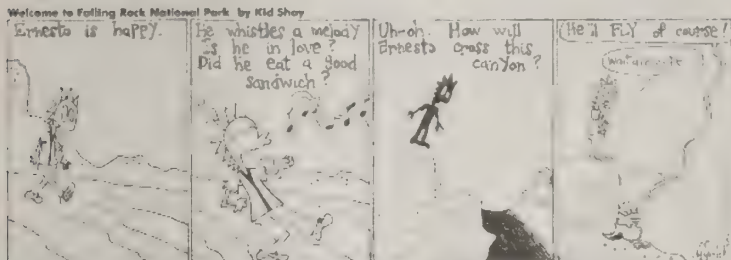
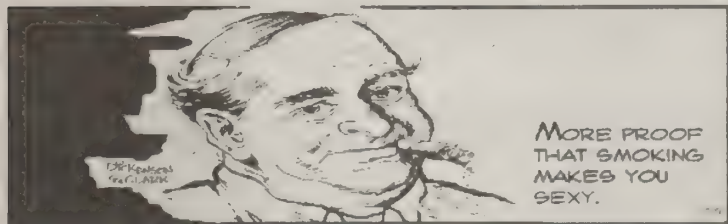
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Arts & Entertainment

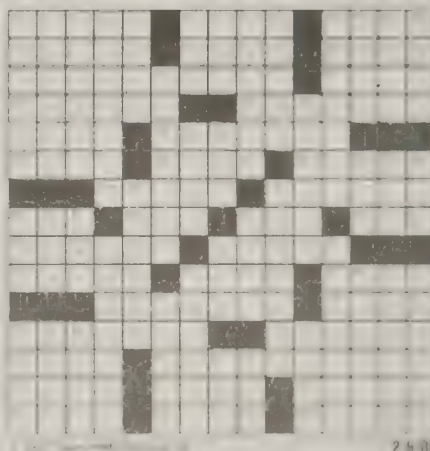


"I'm backpacking through Europe, Mother - how should I know where your arthritis pills are?!"



Crossword

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Solutions



Alternative Edge

Alternative Edge has purpose

An inside look at the Observer's new section

BY NICK SERMUKSNIS
Alt. Edge Editor



Daniel Potocki: My name is Daniel Potocki and I'm the Editor-in-Chief of the NECC Observer.
Nick Sermuksnis: I'm Nick Sermuksnis and I am the Editor of the Alternative Edge section.

DP: When I thought up the Alternative Edge, or Alt. Edge as some have grown to call it; I did so to solve a problem. I felt like our paper wasn't open enough to people who weren't interested in politics or current events. Alt. Edge gives us the opportunity to explore new subjects not familiar with our periodical.

NS: I was offered the chance to write about comic books and eat free food. I couldn't pass up the challenge.

DP: Ha-ha, that's true. Though you have to agree that if Alt. Edge works, it'll be a lot more satisfying. It's a place where we can present different kinds of news, opinions, and content where people who haven't tried out the Observer might give it a shot.

NS: For the record, I've picked up every issue of the Observer since I came to Northern Essex in 2006.

DP: You're a suck up, man.

NS: I have to keep this job somehow. I agree though, it's not that people don't want to read about environ-

ment, trends, or fashion. The point is if necessary, we can fit all of that into Alternative Edge and more! We're going to make trees cool!

DP: Yeah, we'll still cover environment and fashion, but my goal is to really open the doors in terms of subjects that our readers will want to see. I want to include offbeat news, cutting edge technology, and opinions that aren't just politics. I want Alt. Edge to be the section that people go to every time it hits stands.

NS: *claps*

DP: More than anything Alt. Edge is about you, the reader, and all of the NECC student body. Nick, as the Editor, what would you like to see in your section?

NS: The biggest issue is that we won't satisfy everyone. At the same time, I'm not going to cover just the things I want to see. I encourage fellow students to submit their own articles, or e-mail ideas for me to write about. Like you said, this is the section that is specifically tailored to the reader. Though, people will hear a lot about comic books. I can't stop that.

DP: (I can). At the same time, the "Edge" is not for nothing. We've already featured an article on the economics of prostitution, and the genre of horror movies known as, "Torture porn."

NS: Exactly, I want my section to be nothing but comic books and pornography. Brilliant!

DP: Hopefully that won't be the case.

NS: I can dream. Don't get the wrong idea; we're producing this section as professionals. The topics we cover aren't meant to alienate people, but keep them informed. We're just covering the stories you wouldn't normally see.

DP: That's exactly it. Too often the news doesn't cover what people care about, or what people need to know. We want to tell the stories that aren't being told in mainstream media.



Amber Lucas photo

The alternative edge is your source for all that is hip, weird, and or awesome.

NS: Just to clarify, we won't be covering Britney Spears. I did propose the idea of "Britney Watch," but ultimately decided that I didn't want my section to get that kind of reputation. Nothing against tabloid publica-

tions, but like Dan said, we aren't too interested in mainstream media.

DP: I hope that people give Alt. Edge a chance.

NS: With selling points like comics and porn, there's a lot of

chance to give, me thinks.

DP: You're joking, right?

NS: Regardless, this is by the reader for the reader. What's not to love?

Sex and violence fills the screen

Graphic violence is a lucrative business for entertainment lovers

BY DANIEL POTOCKI
Editor-In-Chief

Dubbed by fans and critics of the genre alike, "Torture Porn," or "Gorno," the delightful portmanteau of "gore" and "porn," has become one of Hollywood's biggest money-makers. But what is "Torture Porn?"

"Torture Porn," it turns out is the name of a genre of horror films that deals with graphic and explicit scenes of torture and violence. The "Porn" in "Torture Porn" comes from the fact that the movies seem to always feature attractive young people, most often women, being tortured, or in other ways dismembered, but like pornography the camera never cuts away from the action.

But seriously, how much money could films like these make?

The original "Saw" film cost just 1.2 million dollars to make, but grossed over 100 million worldwide. But this success was not a one-time incident. Eli Roth's film, "Hostel," cost 5 million dollars to make; yet it earned back 80 million dollars.

People are lining up in droves to see these films and pack the theaters

every night. But what are they going to see?

In the case of "Saw" a man cuts through his own leg with a hacksaw or in another scene an attractive young woman is forced to cut open her live boyfriend's stomach with a scalpel to locate the key that will unlock the device on her head which will rip her jaw off if the timer expires.

This is rather mild compared to "Hostel" where a man takes a blow torch to a woman's face, and in a later scene the same woman's eye is removed with a pair of hedge clippers while the camera does not cut away.

Even in writing the images that are brought to mind are simply repugnant. Yet, when you watch one of these movies in the theater, the audience screams certainly, but they also often laugh and cheer at the grotesque scenes of torture. Many advocacy groups despise these films and caution families away from them.

Yet many of the same advocacy groups turned out for one very graphic and gore filled movie, many of them bringing their children. They sighted it as a religious experience and were moved by the images of violence and torture on the screen. I speak of course of Mel Gibson's, "The Passion of the Christ."

The film became the most successful R-rated movie of all time grossing more than 611 million dol-

lars worldwide. Yet it still depicted graphic scenes of torture and violence. Certainly the argument could be made that the differences between movies like "Saw" and "The Passion of the Christ" is the subject matter. But to non-Christians, which would be most of the word, the violence and gore of both movies could be seen as equally senseless.

Graphic depictions of gore can be found in almost every major movie release these days, regardless of the genre. But the question remains why do people enjoy these films?

It seems so odd that someone would willingly choose to view these. But I myself must admit that having sat in the theater, or watched the DVD, I do find enjoyment from this genre. Yet, when I think about the fact that I enjoy watching these movies, I find it very unsettling because I don't know exactly why I do.

Anyone who has ever seen horror movies knows the intensity of the fear that you feel when watching them. It is most certainly the best endorphin rush you can get without an attractive friend or a roller coaster. Magician Penn Jillette once said, "Nothing makes you feel more alive, then the fear of death." But I simply can't shake the feeling that there is more to this.

I find the overtones of sexualized sadism and masochism hard to ignore. After all, the films often

depict scantily clad, if not nude, young men and women (again more often women) being brutalized and, increasingly, sexually assaulted. I think an argument can be made that these films represent a "safe" outlet for humanity's darker desires. After all we exist in a uniquely puritanical society, the idea of sex being linked to evil and death is deeply ingrained into our psyche.

The MPAA has long been known to give higher ratings to films that depict sex than to films that depict violence, and they do that because that is what America is afraid of.

These films are the purest and most distilled form of the splatter genre of old. In those movies, movies like the original Halloween for example, the only person that lives in the end is the good girl who stayed home while her friends went out and partied. All that's happened is the sex and violence has been ramped up.

This sexual aspect combined with our societies fear of the crazed serial killer is what creates the fertile ground for these movies. After all, is not the great fear of the modern serial killer born from the idea that anyone can snap and become a monster? We hear news stories about people living next door to mass murders and cannibals and having no idea. It makes sense that our boogey man is often just a normal person who has gone over the edge.

Is the content of these films

questionable? Yes, to say the least. But perhaps it is a form of cultural catharsis that helps people deal with the world around them.

It is my opinion that the people who watch horror movies, or play violent video games are not the people who are about to snap. It may very well be that these people who work these things out in a safe environment like a theater that are ahead of the rest of us. In the words of a wise man, "If you lock a baby in a tomb for 18 years and then open the door, he will come out crazy." The very act of censorship and repression is in the end what most likely fuels the need for these kinds of movies.

Crazy people will always find ways to do crazy things that hurt people; it is a fact of life and no amount of worry will change it. Hollywood "Torture Porn," isn't really my genre of film, but at the end of the day, life reflects art.

By examining these movies we gain insight into ourselves, so it stands to reason that by watching them we gain insight to our society. Whether they incite a religious experience, or just a new appreciation for life, in the end it doesn't matter. What matters is that as a society we must strive to remember and value the difference between fantasy and reality. If we can do that, and have a little fun at the same time, well then that's money well spent.

This is one box Pandora should have opened first

It is a site filled with the sound of music

By NICK SERMUKSNIS
Alt. Edge Editor

When Pandora opened that box in the earliest days of Greek mythology, she released unimaginable evils for mankind to contend with. While we're still contending with those evils today, there is a new Pandora and she decided to create a website full of goodies this time around. The website Pandora.com is an online radio that allows its members to create radio stations that fit their particular interests.

Instead of waiting endlessly for that one song you want to hear come on your car radio, you get it instantly.

Created by The Music Genome Project, Pandora.com allows its members to create individual stations based on their favorite bands or songs. The website also creates alternative selections based on the type of bands or songs you choose. There are advertisements, but they have proven not to hinder the listening experience for the member. Likewise, if you activate a paid membership then the advertisements will disappear.

You can approve or disapprove of songs that you don't want to show up on your playlist, which Pandora takes into consideration when you access it again. Pandora accesses over 400

attributes, or "genes," that collect everything from melody, harmony, orchestration, and lyrics to personalize your personal stations.

You can also pay for a membership, which disables advertisements. Other features of Pandora are accessing the site through your cell phone or home entertainment system. Sometimes the site offers special stations; right now the site is featuring the soundtrack of, "Across the Universe."

Unfortunately if you decide to study abroad outside of the United States, you won't be able to access Pandora due to legal issues. We hope you have a safe trip though and return to us soon. Until then, enjoy Pandora.com, because it's tailored specifically to your enjoyment.

The Edge Access

NECC Game Show

The LARC committee will host a Renaissance Game show this semester on March 12th at noon in TC103B. They will have two sets of preliminary rounds for students, one the week of February 11th and the other the week on February 25th. Lane Glenn will support, the Renaissance Contest with a \$1000 donation of prize money and will be the emcee.

Texas Hold 'Em

College students throughout New England will have the opportunity to show off their Texas Hold 'Em skills and vie for the \$15,000 Grand Prize in

a special poker tournament created just for them at Rockingham Park on February 7th through 10th. The inaugural New England College World Series of Poker is open to all students who are at least 18 and are currently enrolled in an accredited college or university in the six-state region. A valid college ID must be presented at the time of registration. The tournament kicks off on Wednesday, February 7th with satellite games of \$25, \$40, and \$70 to be held through Saturday, February 9th. The top four finishers from each of the \$70 satellites, the best two players from each of the \$40

satellites, and the top player from the \$25 satellites will win a seat in the main tournament on February 10th. Players may also buy their way in to Sunday's main tournament for \$150 with 8,000 starting chips. The Grand Prize for winning the main tournament is \$15,000, based upon a minimum of 300 players participating. Additionally, ten percent of the players, or the top 30 finishers, will receive cash prizes. For more information or directions, visit www.granitesatellitepoker.com and for questions please e-mail info@newenglandcollegeworldseriesofpoker.com.

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Aries

ARIES (March 21-April 20) Group events and last minute invitations are this week complicated but rewarding.

After Monday, expect friends and lovers to publicly compete for your attention. Be patient, however: over the next six days, diplomacy will be needed to resolve minor disputes or triangles. Long-term social loyalties versus new friendships are accented: make sure others understand your goals, comments and daily obligations. Later this week, watch finances: overspending may soon prove problematic.



Taurus

TAURUS (April 21-May 20) Money plans will soon simplify. After several weeks of scattered priorities, a new era of focus and determination begins. Use this time to streamline time schedules, discuss large investments or finalize home repairs. Your estimations are accurate. Taureans born between 1968 and 1981 will also experience a powerful wave of romantic attraction, revitalized passion and social ambition. Don't hold back: this is the right time to redefine relationships and expand your social circle.



Gemini

GEMINI (May 21-June 21) A unique introduction may captivate your imagination over the next few days. Some Geminis will now steadily expand their emotional lives or recapture lost feelings of social belonging. New friendships are genuine: respond quickly to all invitations. After Wednesday, pay attention to the observations of rela-

tives or insights of trusted colleagues. A previously silent co-worker may soon offer a passionate invitation or reveal a private attraction. Go slow: tensions may quickly escalate.



Cancer

CANCER (June 22-July 22) Yesterday's business alliances will now be strengthened. Before midweek, take extra time to discuss delicate workplace politics with co-workers or partners. Common priorities are worthwhile and will soon be established by older colleagues. Remain open to revised roles. Thursday through Saturday accents subtle breakthroughs between friends and new emotional boundaries in family relationships. Let others express their deepest feelings before offering an opinion: all is well.



Leo

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22) Early this week, someone close may discuss private events, broken promises or failed relationships. If so, offer empathy but encourage new ideas: loved ones may need to resolve past disappointments before committing to the present. Share your opinions and expect an honest response: progress will soon be undeniable. After Thursday, a colleague from the past may reappear and demand completed records or written documents. Stay alert: small details are vital.



Virgo

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22) Business relations are fast-paced and emotionally demanding this week. Temporarily revised duties may prove unmanageable before mid-

week: expect new colleagues to request added assistance and bold commitments. After Friday, a trusted friend or close relative may provide unique insights into family decisions. A recent wave of financial mistakes or minor home disputes will now abruptly end: watch for complex announcements, revised deadlines and new promises.



Libra

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23) Over the next few days, friends and lovers may ask subtle questions and expect detailed answers. Areas affected are yesterday's romantic promises, social planning or future home goals. For many Librans, predictability is now a top priority: offer reassurance and consistent information. Thursday through Saturday, workplace politics may be briefly complicated with inaccurate facts, rumors or speculation. Teams assignments, although controversial, will remain unchanged: remain neutral.



Scorpio

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 22) Renovations, home decisions and minor finances are now highlighted. Some Scorpions will soon expand their daily lifestyles or family expectations. If so, expect complex discussions and new proposals in the coming weeks. Be flexible: creative suggestions are unusual but worthwhile. After Wednesday, watch for business alliances or work loyalties to shift. Older colleagues may offer unique short-term solutions or publicly challenge authority. Stay detached: tempers may flare.



Sagittarius

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 23-Dec. 21) Long-term romance is pleasing and seductive this week. Rekindled passions will soon provide new opportunities for emotional growth. Some Sagittarians may also experience the return of an old lover or distant friend. Opt to avoid repeated patterns: expectations and emotional demands may be too high. Friday through Sunday accent important family discussions. Revised home roles and renewed agreements will soon offer a valuable new beginning: listen closely to suggestions.



Capricorn

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 20) Employment negotiations will work to your advantage over the next eight days. After Monday, study the subtle comments or suggestions of authority figures. At present new job placements or unique promotions may be on the agenda. Discuss all plans with loved ones and ask for honest advice. After Wednesday, social proposals will steadily increase: expect new friends and trusted companions to compete for your time, attention and loyalty. A demanding week: stay balanced.



Aquarius

AQUARIUS (Jan. 21-Feb. 19) Social confidence now attracts potential lovers. Over the next eight days, flirtation in business relationships or workplace attractions may be unsettling. Carefully consider all invitations. New passions will be brief but compelling: pace yourself and expect emotional reversal. Later this week, many Aquarians will

encounter a rare family or social power struggle. React with sensitivity: at present, private agendas or hidden alliances may strongly influence friends, lovers or relatives.



Pisces

PISCES (Feb. 20-March 20) Family discussions are this week positive and rewarding. Previously silent loved ones may now provide a detailed description of their long-term needs. For many Pisceans, several weeks of misinformation will now fade: expect newly revealed plans, fast home changes or revised goals. After Thursday, a close friend may reveal unexpected travel plans, unique romantic decisions or a dramatic change of lifestyle. Listen and offer support: change, although disquieting, is healthy.

If your birthday is this week: Social relations may soon experience a brief but intense phase of emotional conflict. Before Oct. 11, expect long-term friends to ask for more access to your personal life or family decisions. Slowly allow key relationships to expand. Much of the coming year will usher in new levels of intimacy and social involvement. Set firm boundaries and stay focused on shared values. After Dec. 17, business officials may restructure work routines or establish controversial policies. Trust your instincts and, by mid-January, offer a firm response: authority figures will soon adopt your ideas, suggestions or ambitions. After March 3, an 11-month phase of rapid business expansion and vital financial decisions begins.



Can Democracy Prevent Genocide?

This series was designed to support *The Diary of Anne Frank*,
a Top Notch Players production, Spring 2008.

For more information on the speaker series, contact Judith Kamber, Dean of Professional Development, at (978) 556-3955 or visit <http://cit.necc.mass.edu/ofsd/genocide.shtml>

My Experience as a Genocide Orphan: Presented by Sayon Soeun

Wednesday, February 27, 2008, 12:00-1:00, TC-103A

Taken away from my home and family at the approximate age of five, I have no recollection of my first name nor my last name. Being raised as a child soldier in the Khmer Rouge labor camps since before the genocide took place nationwide, I was taught only hatred. There was no such thing as love, whether it was for a parent, friend, or sibling.

With betrayal, violent bloodshed, and death around me at all times, for nearly six years I was drowned in an inhumane environment that no child should ever face or imagine. This is the story of my experience as a Genocide Orphan.

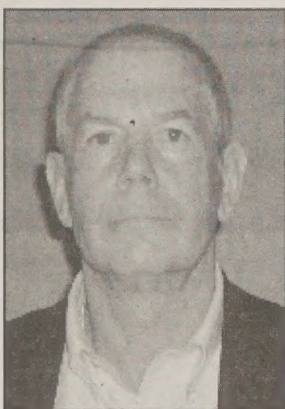


Can Democracy Prevent Genocide? Presented by Richard Kamber

Wednesday, March 26, 2008, 12:00-1:00, TC-103B

For nearly a hundred years genocide—in the broad sense of intentional, state supported mass murder of unarmed civilians—has occurred across the globe in societies large and small, rich and poor, old and new. Surely then, we must wonder whether genocide can happen anywhere or whether there are conditions that render a society immune to the commission of genocide. This is more than a theoretical inquiry. If we knew under what conditions genocide would not occur, we could take steps to prevent it by fostering those conditions.

I believe that democracy provides humanity's best hope for preventing genocide. My talk is an explanation and defense of this idea.



The Holocaust: Lessons for the 21st Century Presented by Sonia Schreiber Weitz

Wednesday, April 2, 2008, 12:00-1:00, E-155

Sonia Schreiber Weitz is a Holocaust survivor, a poet, an educator and a human rights activist. Born in Krakow, Poland, she survived the Krakow Ghetto and five Nazi camps, including Auschwitz and Bergen-Belsen. Sonia is the founder and Education Director of the Holocaust Center Boston North, Inc.

Through her everyday actions, her written and spoken word, she continues to challenge, encourage and inspire her audiences. Sonia dreams of a world "where there are no more victims nor victimizers and, above all, no more bystanders." She is the author of the memoir *I Promised I Would Tell*.



Sports

NECC Track teams off and running

Men's and Women's track teams begin preparing for season

CARLOS OLIVERA
Sports Editor



The Northern Essex men's and women's tracks team have begun the conditioning process for the 2008 outdoor season. In only its third season, the track program hopes to enjoy some of the success it has enjoyed from its first two seasons

In the first season in 2006, Northern Essex crowned its first National Champion in the schools history. James Mwangi brought home the national title in the men's 400-meter race. He pulled away from the field, winning in a run away fashion. Adding to the national championship, the inaugural team also had an astounding six NJCAA District titles.

The women's team won four district titles, while the men brought home two. For the women, they won first place in the women's long jump, shotput, 5,000 meters and 10,000 meter races. Crystal Burgess, Shana Blaney, and three-time NJCAA All-American, Laura

Rudd all took home a district championship. On the men's side, Mwangi won both the triple jump and 400 meters.

Last season the women's team continued the success. Rudd once again won the 5,000 and 10,000-meter races at the district meet. The boys however, did not enjoy as much success as the previous year. They did not win any district titles

race.

This year's team returns a few athletes from last years squad, and a few from the 2006 season. Returning from last year's team is Justin Cooke, Tyler Pagley, as well as Stephanie Naffah. Returning from the 2006 season is James Mwangi and Shana Blaney. Both Mwangi and Blaney took a season off, but hope to return to their form.

“

Adding to the national championship, the inaugural team also had an astounding six NJCAA District Titles

but had three finishes in the top three, good enough to win medals. Sean Dolan placed third in the discus throw as well as the 110-meter high hurdles. Dolan also ran the third leg on the 4X100 meter relay that finished third.

At the national meet, hosted by Howard Community College, Rudd and Dolan continued their success. They both got on the podium in two different events. Rudd, finished third in the 10,000 and fourth in the 5,000. Making it on the podium made Rudd the lone three-time All-American in the schools athletic history. Dolan, finished third in the discus throw and sixth in the javelin throw. Also making the podium at last year's nationals was Geoff Wahome in the 10,000-meter

from when they dominated in 2006.

The track teams haven't been large in stature or in size, but the first two seasons have produced successful and highly competitive teams. Competing with the likes of Northeastern University, or Boston College, and Brown University, really prepares the team well for the district and national meets.

The track team practices Monday at 3:30 in the Tech Center parking lot, or in the gym in the Sport and Fitness Center. They also practice Saturday mornings at 9:30 in the Sport and Fitness Center. If you have any questions or want information about how to join, see Head Coach Dawn Caputo or Athletic Director Sue MacAvoy.

Santana to Sox would be mistake

Santana to Sox would not have been match made in heaven

AARON FOSS
News Editor



Would adding Johan Santana to the Red Sox dugout have been a huge addition to the team? Absolutely, but also completely unnecessary.

Look beyond the fact that we won the World Series after dominating the playoffs. Look beyond the fact that we have arguably the best pitcher in all of baseball. Look beyond the fact that we are poised to do the same thing this year unless some teams move some big names around during the few weeks left before spring training.

We simply didn't need Santana, and certainly not if it meant giving up a bevy of rookie talent. In the trade talks before Christmas, the Red Sox were the leading team to acquire Santana if a move was to be made by

Minnesota. The talent they wanted for him was astounding, as they were asking for both Jacoby Ellsbury and Jon Lester in addition to some minor league talent.

Now Santana is a former Cy Young winner, a consistent strikeout pitcher, and all around one of the best men on the mound in the game today, but giving up that much talent would have been ridiculous. There was some thought behind Theo Epstein's attempts at landing Santana right now.

The main reason being that this will certainly be Curt Schilling's last year with the Red Sox. Losing a pitcher like Schilling hurts your club since you lose both an ace pitcher and a locker room leader. Schilling moving on after 2008, as well as Daisuke Matsuzaka's shaky MLB debut year, left the Red Sox jumping a little too soon to try to land a Schilling replacement for the 2009 season and while looking ahead is good, you can't lose sight of the good of the team this year, for the sake of the future.

Before his trade to the Mets, Santana was also on the list. The other reason they wanted to land such a big name pitcher now is that come the end of the 2008 season, all the attention will turn to Manny Ramirez and Jason Varitek, who also become free agents. Varitek is the best catcher in the game today, despite only

average offensive numbers last season, he is priceless as a man who knows the defensive mechanics of the game and who leads in the locker room.

Despite all that, don't think that the "Captain" won't jump ship if another team offers him a long-term deal with a lot more money. Manny is in the same boat and I think 2008 will be his last year. To not get to far off topic though, the Red Sox money and time will be spent trying to deal with those two men. If Manny leaves after 2008, having Ellsbury still on the team will be that much more important as we will have a huge hole to fill in the outfield.

Ellsbury must stay in Boston, but if a trade could have been worked out for either Jon Lester or Clay Buchholz for Santana, we may have taken it. The bottom line is that we have Josh Beckett. We have what I can assume will be a more confident and effective Matsuzaka, now that he has gained experience and adjusted to the longer season. We have a talented rookie in Jon Lester. With a number of big name free agent pitchers available after the 2008 season, if we need to add to the starting rotation, we have the ability to sign any of them and not have it cost us our young talent and that's if we need to at all.

Weekly Sports Trivia QUESTIONS:

1. How many Super Bowls have the Patriots played in?
2. Who holds the Super Bowl record for receiving yards?
3. Who is the only quarterback to win Super Bowl MVP, without throwing a touchdown pass?
4. Who is the only player to win Super Bowl MVP, while playing for the losing team?
5. Who is the only Patriot to win Super Bowl MVP honors, other than Tom Brady?

1. 6, 1985, 1996, 2001, 2003, 2004, and 2007.
2. Jerry Rice, 225 in 1989.
3. Joe Namath, Super Bowl III.
4. Chuck Howley, Dallas Cowboys, 1971.
5. Deion Branch, Super Bowl XXXIX.

ANSWERS:

WINTERFEST 2008

Lawrence Campus
February 11, 2008
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Haverhill Campus
February 6, 2008
Sport and Fitness Ctr
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龙

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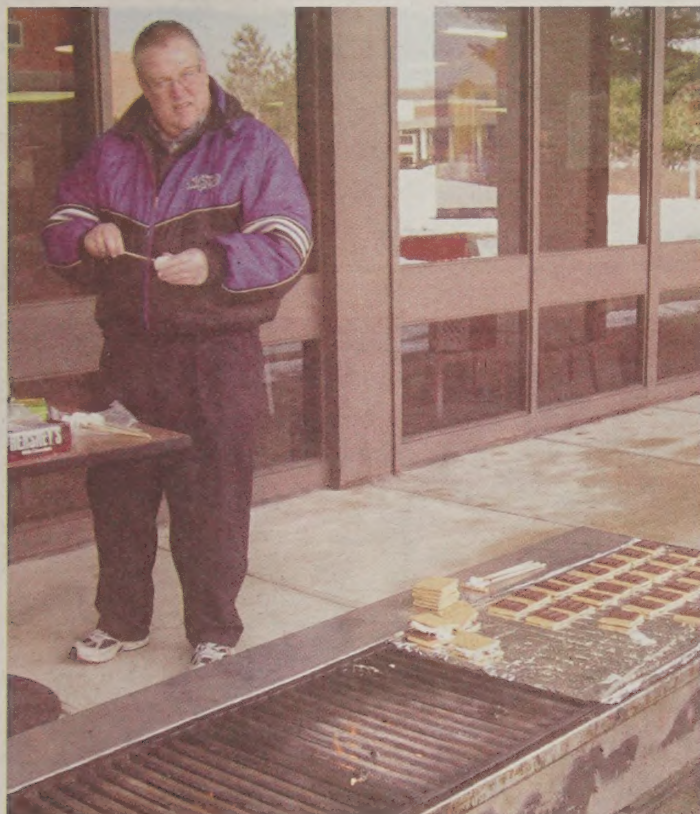
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Back Page



Daniel Potocki photos

Bruce Potter serves smores to NECC students in the bitter cold. Licking the marshmallow stick was frowned upon.

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